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President: Ms. Al-Khalifa ..... (Bahrain)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Tribute to the memory of His Highness Malietoa Tanumafili II, head of State of the Independent State of Samoa

The President: Before proceeding to the items on our agenda, it is my sad duty to pay tribute to the memory of the late head of State of the Independent State of Samoa, His Highness Malietoa Tanumafili II, who passed away on Friday, 11 May 2007.

On behalf of the General Assembly, I request the representative of Samoa to convey our condolences to the Government and the people of Samoa and to the bereaved family of His Highness.

May I now invite representatives to stand and observe a minute of silence in tribute to the memory of His Highness Malietoa Tanumafili II.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silence.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Sri Lanka, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asian States.

Mr. Kariyawasam (Sri Lanka): I stand before the Assembly today on behalf of the Group of Asian States at the United Nations to pay tribute to a great statesman from Asia who has just passed away after serving his people with distinction for long years.

His Highness Malietoa Tanumafili II, head of State of the Independent State of Samoa, who passed away on Friday, 11 May, had been the head of State of Samoa for 45 long years, since the independence of Samoa in January 1962. The remains of His Highness now lie in state in Samoa's Parliament building. A State funeral for His Highness will take place on Friday, 18 May.

His Highness played a prominent role in leading Samoa towards independence, and will therefore be remembered as the father of Samoa. Samoa became the first Pacific island country to achieve full independence, on 1 January 1962. In 1990 the people of Samoa celebrated 50 years of continuous service to the Government by His Highness. In the year 2000 His Highness was bestowed with the Grand Order of Samoa for his dedicated service to the country.

His Highness was the founding Chancellor of the University of Samoa when it was established, in 1984.

Honouring the service rendered to Samoa by His Highness, the Government and the people of Samoa mark his birthday as a national public holiday and as a day of national celebration. His Highness became the oldest and the third longest-serving head of State in the world when he celebrated his ninety-fifth birthday, early this year.

The astute leadership provided by His Highness as head of State ensured the strong foundation on which Samoa's indigenous structures complemented the country's democratic processes and institutions. That has made Samoa a prosperous democracy, a legacy that that has earned the gratitude of all Samoans. He will be remembered for his dignity,

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wisdom and lively sense of humour during his many years of service to the Government and people of Samoa.

With the passing away of His Highness Malietoa Tanumafili II, Asia has lost another outstanding leader who served his country with distinction, dedication and commitment for long years. On this sad occasion, on behalf of all members of the Asian Group, I wish to extend our deepest sympathies to the Government and people of Samoa. The members of the Asian Group also extend our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family of His Highness in their hour of grief.

We are confident that the people of Samoa will continue to keep the dreams and legacy of His Highness alive and that Samoa and its people will reach greater heights in time to come, traversing the path of progress he envisioned.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Latvia, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Mr. Sniedze (Latvia): On behalf of the members of the Group of Eastern European States, I extend our sincere condolences to the nation of Samoa upon the passing away of His Highness King Malietoa Tanumafili II.

King Malietoa Tanumafili II dedicated his long life to the people of Samoa and led Samoa since 1962, when it became the first Polynesian nation to gain independence. The King will be remembered for his wise and compassionate leadership and for the stability and progress that Samoa enjoyed under his reign. He provided a steadying influence that allowed both for modernization and the preservation of his beloved Samoan culture and language.

In these days of sadness, our thoughts are with the nation of Samoa. We extend our heartfelt wishes for the future success of Samoa as an active representative of the Pacific region and a deeply committed Member of the United Nations.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Jamaica, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Mr. Wolfe (Jamaica): On behalf of the members of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, I have the honour to join other delegations in conveying profound condolences to the Government and people of the Independent State of Samoa following the death of one of the founding fathers of the nation, His Highness King Malietoa Tanumafili II, on Friday, 11 May 2007.

He will be remembered as an illustrious statesman who was greatly loved and highly respected by Samoans for his warmth, compassion and humility. People the world over will recall with fondness his passion, commitment, loyalty and dedication to the people of Samoa. The pivotal role played by King Malietoa as father of the nation in preserving the stability of the country during the incipient and undoubtedly painful period following the attainment of his country's independence — for which he struggled — will be indelibly inscribed in the annals of Samoa's history.

The death of the world's third-longest reigning monarch, who served in that capacity since 1963, signals the end of an era. The people of Samoa can be assured that King Malietoa Tanumafili II has left a lasting legacy on which present and future generations can continue to build. Our thoughts and prayers are with the people of Samoa during this difficult time.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Portugal, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and Other States.

Mr. Salgueiro (Portugal): On behalf of the Group of Western European and Other States, I should like to convey our sincere condolences to the Government and people of Samoa, and in particular to the royal family, on the death of their head of State, King Malietoa Tanumafili II.

Through his long reign, King Malietoa represented Samoa with wisdom and insight. He helped to frame Samoa's constitution prior to the country' independence from New Zealand in January 1962. At that time, he became joint head of State. From 1963, following the death of Tupua Tamasese Meaoli, he became sole head of State.

At the time of King Malietoa's death at the age of 94, he was understood to be the world's oldest national leader. Despite this sad loss to the Samoan nation and people, the King will long be remembered for his passionate and committed service to Samoa and the broader Pacific islands region. We therefore hope that once the period of mourning is over, the Samoan people will find renewed opportunities to pursue their

path to development in peace and freedom. Our thoughts go out to the people of Samoa.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Mahiga (United Republic of Tanzania): On behalf of the Group of African States, I wish to pay tribute to His Highness the late Malietoa Tanumafili II, who suddenly passed away on 11 May 2007.

His Highness the late Malietoa Tanumafili II will be deeply remembered for his outstanding leadership, which led to the independence of the State of Samoa and his subsequent appointment as joint head of State at the time of independence in 1962. His appointment in 1963 as the sole head of State following the passing away of Tupua Tamasese Meaoli, who had held joint leadership at the time of independence, was a reflection of the trust that the people of Samoa had in him. He belonged to the league of giants and heroes of the independence movements of the 1960s, which swept the shores of many continents, from the Atlantic through the Indian Ocean to the South Pacific. We have lost him, but we have inherited from him the dignity of independence, the virtues of peaceful coexistence and the wisdom of a grand patriarch. Long live His Highness the late Malietoa Tanumafili II.

At this painful period of great loss, the Group of African States expresses its profound and sincerest sympathy to the family of His Highness and to the Government and the people of Samoa. We are confident that his successor and the people and the Government of Samoa will overcome this grief and safeguard Samoa's independence, stability and prosperity. May the soul of His Highness the late Malietoa Tanumafili II rest in eternal peace.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United States, who will speak on behalf of the host country.

Mr. Wallace (United States of America): The United States was deeply saddened to learn of the passing of His Highness Malietoa Tanumafili II, head of State of Samoa. My Government extends its sincere condolences to King Malietoa's two sons and two daughters and to the people of Samoa during this time of sorrow and mourning.

King Malietoa played an important and valued role in the history of Samoa. He was one of the country's founding fathers and served as head of State since Samoa gained independence in 1962. He led by example, working to promote democracy and prosperity in his country and throughout the Pacific.

The United States joins the people of Samoa in mourning the loss of their beloved leader.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Tonga, who will speak on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum.

Mrs. 'Utoikamanu (Tonga): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 13 members of the Pacific Islands Forum group of countries, and to express our grave sorrow and profound sadness on the passing away of His Highness the late Malietoa Tanumafili II, head of State of the Independent State of Samoa, on Friday, 11 May 2007.

His Highness the late Malietoa Tanumafili II had been at the vanguard of Samoa's quest for independence. In 1962, when Samoa became the first Pacific island country to achieve full independence, His Highness was appointed head of State. He faithfully served his people as head of State of Samoa for 45 years with great humility, distinction and much affection. He worked tirelessly to pursue the development aspirations of Samoa. The death of His Highness is a great loss to Samoa. His Highness's dedication and commitment in the service of his people will always be remembered by the people of Samoa.

The passing away of His Highness the late Malietoa Tanumafili II is also a great loss to the Governments and peoples of the Pacific island countries. His Highness provided vital leadership and made enormous contributions to the development of the Pacific region in the areas of regional peace and security, health, education and cultural issues, as well as environment and other social issues. We therefore express our profound gratitude for all his leadership and contributions to the betterment of the people of the Pacific region.

May we pay our respects and cherish the legacy of His Highness's service to the people of Samoa, the Pacific region and all humanity. May His soul rest in eternal peace.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Samoa.

Mr. Elisaia (Samoa) (*spoke in Samoan*): Aue! ua maliliu toa, ua maumau ai auupega o le taua'.

(*spoke in English*)

How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished! So lamented David upon hearing of the death of his best friend, Jonathan, and his father, King Saul.

The Government and people of Samoa, on whose behalf I speak, are touched by the honour accorded to our beloved, the late head of State of Samoa, His Highness Susuga Malietoa Tanumafili II. The expressions of sympathy and the messages of condolences from the representatives of the regional groups, the Government of the United States of America as host country, and the Kingdom of Tonga on behalf of our Pacific Islands Forum group will continue to be a source of strength and inspiration for our people to draw from in our nation's darkest hour, as we try to come to terms with the enormity of our loss.

To be superfluous on occasions like this can be a tempting diversion, but that is not my mission or my goal. It is equally difficult not to be emotional, but I will try not to succumb. Why? Because if the heart bleeds, it bleeds because it feels the truth. How I wish that this occasion would not have taken place and that I did not have to stand before the Assembly and grieve the loss of His Highness the late head of State, who for me was the embodiment and personification of everything best in the Fa'a Samoa.

Educated in Samoa and New Zealand, holder of one of Samoa's four royal titles and a prominent leader for 22 years during the pre-independence era, His Highness was already groomed to lead Samoa into uncharted waters when he became joint head of State with the late Tupua Tamasese Meaole, upon Samoa's attainment of statehood in 1962. A year later, when Tupua Tamasese Meaole passed away, in 1963, Malietoa Tan Tanumafili II became sole head of State, a title he held for 44 years, until his death last Friday.

His astute and enlightened stewardship of Samoa's destiny for 45 years will always be remembered for the political stability, the social cohesion and unity, peace and progress that Samoa has enjoyed and continues to enjoy to this day — something that some of us have come to take for granted.

Malietoa Tanumafili II was a humble man. He was very much loved and respected by Samoans of all walks of life. He was at home with royalty as much as with ordinary people. He shunned the limelight but would warm up to people irrespective of their status and political leanings. Appropriately, the birthday of His Highness is marked by a public holiday as a sign of national respect.

On a few occasions, I personally witnessed His Highness driving his golf cart on a pier unescorted. Together with his love for golf and a tolerance for the different faith-based churches in Samoa, all those avenues provided for greater people-to-people interactions and contacts between His Highness and the average Samoan.

It is Samoa's late head of State whose memory I am here to mourn. Indeed, he was a true people's leader whose unassuming demeanour helped break down artificial barriers between royalty and commoner, between traditionalist and modernist, between the mainstream churches and evangelical movements and, in the process, really helped to lay the foundation for the development of Samoa as a modern country.

But perhaps his most enduring legacy was his capacity to bridge the divide between the pre- and post-independence Samoa by adapting and moulding the best the world had to offer to the Samoan cultures and traditions that are grounded firmly on the Christian principles and values upon which Samoa is founded. His clear vision was to guarantee that our identity as Samoans would not be compromised and that it continues to be firmly rooted in a living and dynamic Samoan culture that is resilient to change and able to absorb and blend the best from both worlds.

(*spoke in Samoan*)

"Aue, ua tagi nei le fatu male eleele" 'Tau is ina is pau se toa, ae toe tulai se toa'

(*spoke in English*)

Alas, the stones and the earth wept with profound anguish at the loss of our beloved leader.

We are reassured by the wisdom of our forefathers who decreed that at the fall of one great warrior, may his successor be equal to the task that lies ahead.

Even in Samoa's hour of darkness, the spirit and the works of His Highness live on. Farewell, Malietoa,

and in your honour, I am wearing this lei, which was your favourite. God bless and thank you.

Agenda item 122 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/61/709/Add.5)

The President: I would like to draw the attention of the General Assembly to document A/61/709/Add.5, in which the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that since the issuance of his communication contained in document A/61/709 and Adds.1 through 4, Kyrgyzstan has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter. May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of the information contained in this document?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 114

Multilingualism

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/317)

Draft resolution (A/61/L.56)

The President: I give the floor to the representative of France to introduce draft resolution A/61/L.56.

Mr. De La Sablière (France) (*spoke in French*): It is an honour for me to present to the General Assembly the draft resolution under agenda item 114, on multilingualism (A/61/L.56), which delegates have before them. This text, which in a few moments will be adopted by consensus, is the result of negotiations that my delegation has had the privilege of coordinating since February.

At the outset I would like to thank the very many delegations that took part in the meetings conducted by France, thus showing their interest and devotion to the principle of multilingualism. I would like to emphasize that for the first time, before the actual intergovernmental negotiations, we were in a position to hold several question-and-answer sessions with the Secretariat — whose availability I would like to pay tribute to — especially on the Secretary-General's report on multilingualism. These informal exchanges were, I think, very useful, and their use should certainly be renewed.

The negotiating process conducted by my delegation was carried out in a constructive spirit, with the support of everybody. The inclusive and ultimately consensual nature of our discussions constituted the cornerstone of our approach to this draft resolution. Although it is difficult for me to dwell on one or another aspect of the draft resolution, it seems to me that it responds to two requirements: to ensure a global approach to the issue of multilingualism, and to promote an ambitious and at the same time reasonable vision.

First of all, the text guarantees a comprehensive approach to the question of multilingualism because the General Assembly recalls the need to strictly observe the rules laid down for the linguistic regime in the United Nations with regard to both working languages and official languages. The cross-cutting nature of this resolution can be measured by the yardstick of the subjects it deals with: daily activities of the Organization, that is, conference services, public information — and, more specifically, the website — and human resource management, but also its external activities, the proof of which is the positive appreciation of the United Nations Information Centres.

This comprehensive approach to multilingualism is also found by the mention in the resolution of languages other than working and official languages, which naturally are included. Thus for the first time, the General Assembly stresses the importance of providing United Nations information, technical assistance and training tools, whenever possible, in the local languages of the beneficiary countries. Finally, my delegation must express its satisfaction at the mention, also for the first time in the resolution, of languages used by persons with disabilities.

The text also defends a balanced and ambitious view of multilingualism. It is balanced because it shows constant budget costs. It is balanced also because it mentions a number of initiatives and measures already taken by the Secretariat. I am thinking here of the launching of the United Nations Intranet site, as well as the establishment of external partnerships between the United Nations and institutions of higher learning in order to increase the number of Internet pages available, which is the case for the Russian, Spanish and Chinese languages. The resolution is also balanced, finally, because for the first time mention is made of official languages of the

United Nations that use non-Latin and bidirectional scripts.

This draft resolution is also ambitious, because the General Assembly decides to move ahead on a number of specific issues. I have referred to some of them already, but I would also like to mention the proclamation of the year 2008 as International Year of Languages, or the fact that the Assembly takes note of the Secretary-General's proposal regarding the informal network of focal points responsible for supporting the Coordinator for Multilingualism, whose appointment the Assembly calls for.

The adoption of this resolution on multilingualism is not an end in itself, of course. It constitutes an important step for the work of the United Nations, because multilingualism is the linguistic, cultural, even civilizational equivalent of multilateralism. Let us not forget that the Charter of the United Nations starts with the words: "We the peoples of the United Nations".

The right to use one's language, the capacity to communicate and thus to understand and make oneself understood, and the preservation of a heritage that might be hundreds or even thousands of years old must be at the heart of the mission of the United Nations. Two eminent nineteenth-century men of letters summed up this issue perfectly. Stendhal said: "The first instrument of a people's genius is its language", and Goethe said: "Those who know nothing of foreign languages know nothing of their own."

We therefore deem it essential to mobilize so as to give life to the principle of multilingualism within and outside the United Nations. That is the objective of this draft resolution.

I cannot conclude without warmly thanking the draft's many sponsors, who wished to show their full support for it in a symbolic manner. A total of 113 Member States — a record for this resolution — have agreed to sponsor the draft.

Mr. Hachani (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am pleased to take the floor in this debate on agenda item 114 on multilingualism. I should like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive and informative report on multilingualism in the Secretariat and for the important conclusions that it contains, in addition to the recommendations on enshrining multilingualism within the Secretariat.

I should like to take this opportunity also to thank the coordinator of the draft resolution on multilingualism that was submitted to the General Assembly today and which was introduced by the Ambassador of France. I should like to commend the efforts of all parties that contributed to this consensus text. Indeed, my delegation took part in the consultations. Consensus has been reached on the draft resolution, and we hope that we and all concerned parties will implement it.

Tunisia is proud of its Arabic language. That is its official language, in addition to French, which has special status. Tunisia is proud of having made the study of foreign languages a priority in its educational system. We believe that multilingualism in the United Nations, as enshrined through the use of the official languages on an equal footing, in a non-preferential manner, serves to enrich the work of the Organization in the carrying out of its daily activities, in compliance with the principles underpinning our Organization. It is a forum for dialogue, consultation, respect, tolerance, openness and acceptance of differences.

In addition to being a tool for dialogue and for the effective participation of all in the work of the Organization, each United Nations language carries with it a certain cultural, cognitive and civilizational baggage. Languages are vehicles for ideas, principles and references that reflect various perspectives on the future of humankind, without causing any alienation or dispute among us. Thus safeguarding multilingualism in the United Nations also means ensuring respect for diversity as a source of wealth and enrichment.

Promoting the image of the United Nations in the eyes of the general population involves raising awareness of its work, its programmes and its objectives through the balanced use of the official languages. It is important, therefore, to ensure conducive conditions and the necessary resources, on an equal footing, for all United Nations languages. The goal is to ensure respect, in actions and in words, for the principle of linguistic equality throughout all the activities of the Organization.

Despite the difficulties we are facing in achieving parity among the official languages, we view this as a priority issue. We must attach greater importance to it and make additional efforts in that respect, especially as regards the dissemination of official and unofficial documents and interpretation during meetings.

In that respect, I should like to pay tribute to the efforts made the Department of Public Information to promote the principle of multilingualism and of parity among the official languages in the work of the United Nations in the audiovisual and electronic areas. Those efforts have resulted in an increased interest on the part of the public in the publications of the Organization. For example, use of the Organization's Arabic website has increased by 41 per cent compared with 2004, and use of French sites also has increased, by 33 per cent.

I am also pleased to note the work done by the United Nations Information Centres and all the work they are doing to disseminate information to the general public through the use of local languages.

Lastly, I should like to reaffirm that the principle of multilingualism is very important to the United Nations because it is an essential pillar for interaction among peoples. It is a tool that ensures greater participation by all in our work. Thus we must preserve the richness that languages bring by various means, especially through the allocation of human resources and through cooperation and coordination with Member States and specialized agencies, on the basis of a policy that takes into account the future needs of our Organization in that area.

Mr. Vila Coma (Andorra) (*spoke in French*): I am pleased to address the Assembly on agenda item 114, on multilingualism.

Andorra, because of its geographical situation and its social and cultural diversity, has always been very interested in this subject and understands the specific issues involved. Andorra is once again a sponsor of the draft resolution because we believe that it will lead to respect for the balanced use of the official languages of the United Nations and to the safeguarding of languages as the foundation of cultural diversity.

Today the General Assembly will adopt the draft resolution on multilingualism, and we welcome this. I should like to take this opportunity to commend the excellent work done by the facilitator in conducting our negotiations. In that regard, we welcome the pivotal role of all those delegations that took part in the discussions in order to arrive at a compromise text.

Mr. Golovinov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Multilingualism in the United Nations, as expressed in particular through the use, in the Organization's work, of the official and working languages, forms the very basis of the universal character of the Organization and is an important means of achieving the fundamental purposes of the Charter of the United Nations.

The experience accumulated over the Organization's 60 years of existence makes clear that if due attention is not paid by the United Nations to the issue of safeguarding multilingualism in its daily work, the harmonious integration of a growing number of countries in the practical work of the United Nations will prove difficult.

The promotion of parity among the six official languages of the United Nations is essential to ensure genuine multilingualism in the Organization. That includes ensuring unimpeded communication among representatives of Member States and intergovernmental or expert bodies in all official languages through high-quality conference services and the achievement of linguistic parity in website design and in the Organization's public information activities. In that connection, we emphasize the need to swiftly complete the process of including all official documents throughout the Organization's history on the United Nations website in all official languages.

Preserving and strengthening the principle of multilingualism at the United Nations is also essential in ensuring that the peoples of the world have reliable information about the work of the Organization, thus increasing international support for that work. Nor must we forget that the principle of equality among United Nations official languages means that equal treatment must be given to all language services of the Secretariat, viewing their resource and staffing provisions in the light of actual workload. That will largely determine the quality of the services that they provide to Member States.

Russia attaches great importance to genuine multilingualism at the United Nations and throughout the world as a means of enhancing mutual understanding among peoples, the exchange of knowledge, values and positive experiences, and mutual spiritual enrichment through a balanced dialogue among cultures. In that connection, Russia welcomes UNESCO's initiative to proclaim 2008 as the International Year of Languages.

Finally, I wish to emphasize that, in our view, draft resolution A/61/L.56, on multilingualism,

presented today for the consideration of Member States is another serious step on the path towards the attainment of one of the Organization's most important objectives. Russia, as one of the sponsors of the draft resolution, calls upon Member States to lend it their unanimous support.

Mr. Motoc (Romania) (*spoke in French*): Romania attaches particular importance to the biennial adoption of a General Assembly resolution on multilingualism. Linguistic diversity is an integral and essential part of cultural diversity and a sine qua non for the development of humanity in its diverse forms and manifestations. Indeed, multilingualism is the best way of expressing the very essence of the multilateral nature of the United Nations.

In that connection, we welcome the fact that the text to be put to the vote shortly reaffirms the need to ensure that all United Nations official languages are given equal treatment in the world Organization's activities. In particular, Romania welcomes the references in draft resolution A/61/L.56 to the work carried out in local languages by the United Nations information centres, to the development of United Nations websites in the six official languages and to the proclamation of 2008 as the International Year of Languages. Here, I wish to mention the efforts made and the encouraging results achieved by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management — a Department that assists you, Madam President, in a very professional manner.

We believe that the next resolution on multilingualism, in 2009, could offer an even more favourable framework for the inclusion of an explicit reference to peacekeeping operations. That proposal was made this year by the Canadian delegation and was supported by the francophone group and other countries. The fifth International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers, which will be observed shortly, on 29 May, will be an opportunity for renewed reflection about the effectiveness and importance of good interaction — including with regard to linguistic comprehension — between United Nations forces and local populations.

I should like to warmly thank France for having undertaken the task of coordinating the negotiations and for having brought us, in a patient and clearsighted manner, to a final consensus after more than three months of debate. Indeed, the negotiations aroused increased interest — sometimes even contradictory interest — on the part of many delegations. While the terms "flexibility" and "constructive spirit" might now seem like leitmotifs sometimes intended to conceal what could be perceived as a lack of progress, they nevertheless reflect — when demonstrated by everyone — the conditions necessary for effective and meaningful collective action.

Finally, my delegation wishes to thank all delegations that demonstrated flexibility and a genuine constructive spirit throughout the negotiations. Like my French colleague, we wish to note the impressive record number of sponsors of the text: 113 countries.

Mr. Seye (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I should like at the outset to thank the French delegation, which coordinated the negotiations on draft resolution A/61/L.56, for its tireless efforts to arrive at a balanced text on a subject of such great importance as multilingualism. This cross-cutting topic deserves our full attention, because multilingualism relates to the daily activities of the United Nations, whether here or in the field.

My delegation believes that the cross-cutting nature of multilingualism is a sine qua non for compliance with the principle of equal treatment of languages in the United Nations system. Like my colleague from Romania, I should like to express the hope that we will see a reference to United Nations peacekeeping operations in the next resolution on this item, because we believe that intervention on the ground should involve the use of languages that can be understood by the populations for whom the work of the Organization is intended. To that end, we hope for even greater flexibility in the future on the part of the delegations that participated in the negotiations. Those delegations, it must be said, demonstrated flexibility, but — I am thinking of the future — could make more concessions and show more understanding for the benefit of all nations that use the daily services of the Organization.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/61/L.56. I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to inform

members that, in connection with draft resolution A/61/L.56, entitled "Multilingualism", I wish to place on record the following statement on financial implications on behalf of the Secretary-General, in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

Under the terms of operative paragraph 4 of the draft resolution, the General Assembly would request the Secretary-General

> "to ensure that all language services are given equal treatment and are provided with equally favourable working conditions and resources, with a view to achieving maximum quality of those services, with full respect for the specificities of the six official languages and taking into account their respective workloads".

Further, under the terms of operative paragraph 27 of the draft resolution, the General Assembly would request the Secretary-General "to submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-third session a comprehensive report on the full implementation of its resolutions on multilingualism". In that regard, any resulting resource implications will be addressed in the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its sixty-third session on the implementation of the present draft resolution, as called for under operative paragraph 27.

The President: Before we proceed to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that, since the introduction of the draft resolution, the following countries have become co-sponsors: Angola, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Colombia, Guyana, Iceland, Iraq, Kuwait, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nicaragua, Peru, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Suriname, Timor-Leste, the United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan and Zambia.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/61/L.56.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/61/L.56?

Draft resolution A/61/L.56 was adopted (resolution 61/266).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 114?

It was so decided.

Agenda items 7 and 106 (*continued*)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items: request of the reopening of sub-item (b) of agenda item 106: Appointment of members of the Committee on Contributions

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/61/562/Add.1)

The President: Members will recall that the General Assembly concluded its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 106 — Appointment of members of the Committee on Contributions — at its 54th plenary meeting on 16 November 2006.

In order for the Assembly to consider the report of the Fifth Committee under that sub-item, it will be necessary to reopen consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 106.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to reopen consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 106?

It was so decided.

The President: May I further take it that the Assembly agrees to proceed to the consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 106 at the present meeting to take up the report of the Fifth Committee?

It was so decided.

Introduction of the reports of the Fourth and Fifth Committees

The President: The Assembly will now turn to the report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) on agenda item 33 and the report of the Fifth Committee on sub-item (b) of agenda item 106.

If there is no proposal under rule 66 of the rules of procedure, I shall take it that the General Assembly decides not to discuss the reports of these two Committees which are before the Assembly today.

It was so decided.

The President: Statements will therefore be limited to explanations of vote. The positions of delegations regarding the recommendations of the Committees have been made clear in the Committees and are reflected in the relevant official records.

May I remind members that, under paragraph 7 of decision 34/401, the General Assembly agreed that

> "When the same draft resolution is considered in a Main Committee and in plenary meeting, a delegation should, as far as possible, explain its vote only once, that is, either in the Committee or in plenary meeting unless that delegation's vote in plenary meeting is different from its vote in the Committee."

May I remind delegations that, also in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Before we begin to take action on the recommendations contained in the reports of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) and Fifth Committee, I should like to advise representatives that we are going to proceed to take decisions in the same manner as was done in the Committees, unless notified otherwise in advance.

I should therefore hope that we may proceed to adopt without a vote those recommendations that were adopted without a vote in the respective Committees.

Agenda item 33

Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects

Report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) (A/61/409/Add.1)

The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) in paragraph 9 of its report.

I now call on the representative of Uganda for an explanation of vote before the voting.

Mr. Butagira (Uganda): Before a vote is taken, I thought I should take the floor just to underscore the importance of the Secretary-General's report and the accompanying draft resolution on peacekeeping.

My country attaches great importance to the peacekeeping role of the United Nations, not only because Uganda has its forces in various peacekeeping operations undertaken by the Organization, but also because deploying peacekeeping operations is one of the important roles played by the United Nations and therefore deserves our wholehearted support.

Secondly, I would also draw attention to the fact that, yesterday, the Security Council adopted a resolution extending the mandate of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). Uganda keenly followed that action because, among other things, the resolution mandates MONUC to disarm rebel forces in the eastern Congo. We commend that and we hope that MONUC, as one of the United Nations peacekeeping operations, will proceed to do so.

Lastly, on the issue of sexual exploitation, we support the whole concept of zero tolerance. Indeed, peacekeepers should be peacekeepers and not peace abusers. In this connection, it should also be remembered that because of poverty some of the victims are willing victims, as it were, participating in their sexual abuse. Therefore it is important that the underlying factors be addressed — namely, those stemming from poverty — as a way of helping to redress this scourge.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution entitled "Comprehensive review of a strategy to eliminate future sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations peacekeeping operations". The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 61/267).

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 33.

Agenda item 106 (*continued*)

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(b) Appointment of members of the Committee on Contributions

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/61/562/Add.1)

The President: In accordance with the decision taken earlier, the General Assembly will now consider the report of the Fifth Committee on sub-item (b) of agenda item 106, entitled "Appointment of members of the Committee on Contributions" (A/61/562/Add.1). The Fifth Committee recommends in paragraph 4 of its

report that the General Assembly appoint Mr. Thomas Thomma of Germany as a member of the Committee on Contributions for a term of office beginning today, 16 May 2007, and ending on 31 December 2008.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to appoint Mr. Thomas Thomma of Germany as a member of the Committee on Contributions for a term of office beginning on 16 May 2007 and ending on 31 December 2008?

It was so decided.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 106?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 4.25 p.m.